

H. Alcock
*The Vicissitudes of Time, and the enduring
Bliss of Eternity;*

A SERMON,

PREACHED

AT HIGH-WYCOMBE,

On THURSDAY, MAY 19th;

And at WOOBURN, on Sunday, May 22, 1796;

Occasioned by the much-lamented Death of Mr. FRANCIS
BLACKWELL, of LOUDWATER:

To which are added,

The solemn Charges to, and dying Prayers for, his Children,
Grand Children, Domestics, Workmen, and Friends.

By T. ENGLISH, of Wooburn, Bucks.

He was a burning and shining light.—CHRIST.

The memory of the just is blessed.—SOLOMON.

Published by general Request, from a sincere Respect to this
valuable Character.

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1796.

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A SERMON, &c.

THE circumstances relating to the text my dear departed, venerable father, and affectionate and steady friend, had chosen for the subject of his funeral discourse, are somewhat singular. The Sabbath-day morning on which he was seized with the complaint, which terminated in his death, I was not acquainted with his situation, having seen him on the preceding evening, and left him as well as usual. Being at Mr. Allnutt's at Wycombe; before the family came together in the morning, I took the Bible and opened at the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, and when I came to the twentieth verse, my attention was unexpectedly arrested; and by a strong impression on my mind it was suggested, "Soon, very soon, you will be called to consider this subject in relation to your
A 2 friend."

friend." My spirits, which are too prone to dejection, were greatly depressed, and a train of very gloomy ideas being presented, I found it expedient to close the book, and divert my attention from the painful subject. I am not disposed to attend to such impulses in religious concerns, not warranted by the word of God, as they might lead to wild enthusiasm; but it strikes me very forcibly, that this impression was intended as a premonition, and as preparatory to this solemn event. Immediately on leaving my friend's house, a messenger rode by me, who was going in haste for medical assistance. It is not easy to describe what my feelings were when I was informed that the case of my friend was exceeding dangerous. But if the distant view of his departure was painful, what are my sensations now it is realized? His remains are just committed to the silent tomb, and we are now paying the last respect to his memory, as to *the memory of the just which is blessed*. I ask your prayers that I may be assisted in the duties of this affecting service; and let your hearts be lifted up, that this solemn dispensation may be sanctified for our eternal profit and the glory of God,

while

while I attempt to consider the subject before us.

Isaiah lx. 20.

Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

THIS chapter contains the strongest and most ample assurances of the exceeding great prosperity and enlargement of the Jewish church. *The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee; these are they that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows.* The text, in its connexion, may literally refer to the Jewish church and state, after being afflicted with dark and gloomy dispensations, and desolating judgments, by the enemy which was *the rod of the divine anger, and the staff of God's indignation.* These adversities were to be followed with great security, felicity, and glory. *Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. The*

sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

It may be considered, also, with no less propriety, as applicable to the gospel dispensation, when the Sun of Righteousness arose on our benighted world, with his light and glory ; and the church was illuminated and adorned with the perfection of beauty, which he is called in the beginning of our chapter to manifest. *Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

However various the opinions of wise and good men are, relating to the millennium, or the vast increase of the light of divine truth in the latter day, we may rest assured from this chapter, which may apply to this state of the church, that the period will come when inveterate superstition, obstinate prejudices, perverse reasonings, and habitual vices, these strong holds of Satan, shall yield to the mighty, the omnipotent, energy of divine truth.

But our dear departed friend was not employing his mind in these *pious* speculations ;
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he appears to have been admitted within the vail; and, like *John*, he was favoured with a sight of the *holy city, the new Jerusalem*, even that city which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*. He was indulged with an assurance of his citizenship; and having a view of the text in its highest and noblest sense, he applied it to that state of glory into which the souls of the faithful enter at their death; for which he was fitted, and rejoiced that he could say, for himself, that *his sun should no more go down, neither should his moon withdraw herself; for the Lord would be his everlasting light, and the days of his mourning should be ended.*

I only mean to give you the outlines of a sermon, being chiefly concerned to bring forward his dying testimony, and solemn charges; the weight and importance of which must needs affect you, and prove more interesting than any thing I can say. To adopt his own words, “The expressions of dying men are sometimes useful.”—The text,

* Rev. xxi. 2—23.

In the *first* place, implies the incessant and affecting vicissitudes of divine Providence; and *secondly*, it asserts the permanent and unvarying bliss which will succeed. “Thy sun shall no more go down,” &c.

1st. Changing scenes and affecting vicissitudes attend our present state.

Mutability is to be seen throughout the whole system of created existence. Universal nature is constantly varying; changeableness marks every object; it is essential to the very constitution of things as they now appear.

“Look Nature through, ’tis revolution all,
Day follows night, and night the dying day.
Stars rise and set.”

The earth and seas are ever in motion, no season continues long in the same state. Time, age, sickness, and innumerable accidents, produce alterations on the face of all animal existence; the pleasing form and fashion of terrestrial objects pass away. This is the fruit of sin; *all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof jaureth away**. Immutability is the exclu-

* 1 Pet. i. 24.

five prerogative of Jehovah. While the very *heavens wax old as a garment, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

There are numerous *changing occurrences in the righteous and mysterious administrations of divine Providence.* What convulsions have been lately felt at the very centre of human governments ! What violent agitations through the kingdoms of the world ! What general expectation of something new ! Look back to past ages, and you will see that peace and war, unity and discord, plenty and famine, prosperity and adversity, have been alternately changing, not only in the largest societies, but in narrower circles, and even among individuals. The great wheel of Providence is ever in motion, and that part of it which is this moment lowest, the next is elevated to the top. What events may attend us we know not. It is the highest felicity to be prepared for the worst. Justice or mercy take the lead in these dispensations. It would be difficult to say with certainty, which is most displayed. Mercy abused, occasions dreadful work for justice ; and the administration of justice sanctified, gives an occasion for mercy to return to promote human

man happiness. *Joseph* saw the immediate hand of God in the diversified scenes through which he passed,—and was resigned.—It was this that supported the patience of *Job*, and led him meekly to adore God in the most painful trials: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord.* His hand is in all that befalls us: *Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?* Though unseen, *he is there*,—in the storm, in the whirlwind, in the fire, in the earthquake, and in the still small voice. *I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things* *. Satisfied of the infinite wisdom of God, we are still; we learn quietude, content, and silence.

The dissolution of earthly relations, into which we enter often with too sanguine expectations. This consideration gives a full establishment to the truth of our doctrine. What *fluctuating friendships* have we found! we have attempted to pluck the rose, but have been pierced with the thorn. What poignant anguish have we found *in separation from the objects of our affection*! The gourd was eaten of the worm, and we no longer

* *Isaiah* xlv. 7.

enjoyed the delightful shade. The pains of such visitations are too well known to tender sensibility. How *unsettled our situation!* There is *a dead fly in every one of our pots of ointment.* Our warmest nests have their inconveniences. Could that spot be found where they have not, there we should be disposed to build. Some evil must necessarily exist, some desirable accommodation must be lacking. Seek not perfect convenience; for the most experienced will assure you that your pursuit is vain. *This is not your rest, it is polluted,—arise, therefore, and depart.* As you have been, you still will be tossed hither and thither; therefore do not fix on what you must be torn from: but we are so sensual, that we may well say, “who is sufficient for these things?”

“ Our hearts are fasten’d to the world
By strong and various ties;
But every sorrow cuts a string,
And urges us to rise.”——GOLDSMITH.

But amidst all the mutations which attend us and our prospects, there is no embarrassment with him who with infinite composure, and eternal calmness, directs every varying

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ing event to his own glory and the good of his chosen.

How varying are our frames! Their changes arise from different causes; trying providences, —Satan's temptations,—inward depravity,—the want of health,—bodily weakneses and pains, give a great variety to our sensations. To-day we possess peace and comfort, to-morrow we are in trouble;—now we are lifted up with joy, anon we are plunged into the depths of sorrow; our hope is shaken; dejection, and a kind of despair, succeeds. *Without are fightings, and within are fears.* Thus our sun often goes down, and our moon withdraws itself. We lose superior and inferior evidence; but the times of refreshing return again, and we proceed with great cheerfulness and alacrity in our course. David found this diversity in the frame of his mind; *Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled**. Our departed friend was generally happy and cheerful through life; but he had his exercises, and in his last hours he was harassed

* Psal. xxx. 7.

by the great adversary. On such occasions, fixing his eyes, he would say, “ Be gone, be gone, you have nothing to do with *me*; you *know* you have nothing to do with me; I hate sin, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; get you gone, your’s are lies.” Blessed confidence! before such language Satan cannot stand. Being thus resisted, he fled from him.

These, and every other vicissitude, will soon issue in the *last important change of death*; when our character and state will be unalterably fixed*. Our sun will then go down, as to our body, to *rise no more, till the morning of the resurrection*. In this moment, how awful will it be, if our sun should set in the clouds of ignorance, guilt, and the blackness of despair; and the pale moon of inferior joys be turned into an increase of that blood which must rest on our guilty heads! Mortality is inscribed in indelible characters, on every relation, object, and enjoyment—*all things perish in their using*. Death is the door by which the faithful enter into life eternal; many of our dear friends

* Rev. xxij. 11.

are gone before us, and we are on the threshold. Through death the wicked must enter the doleful regions of eternal misery. "Once lost," our dear friend used to say, "lost for ever."—But let us hasten to brighter scenes.

The permanent and unvarying bliss which shall succeed these changes at the death of the blessed.

It supposes the *immortality of the soul of man*, which renders such a state essential to its ultimate felicity. "The soul is that spiritual, reasonable, immortal subsistence, from which originate our thoughts, our desires, our reasoning; which distinguish us from the brute creation, and in which consist, chiefly, our resemblance to God. This subsistence is spiritual, because it thinks; it is immortal, because it is spiritual. The scripture represents man as endowed with the privilege of understanding,—with the knowledge of God,—with wisdom and immortality,—and the hope of future and eternal happiness. At men only are its threatenings pointed, which respect the punishment of another world, and the pains of hell. Scripture, reason, and experience, abundantly support this doctrine.

The soul is not *necessarily* immortal in the same sense God is; for *he only hath immortality in himself*. Our immortal existence depends on the *divine will*,—it is his *manifest and irreversibile purpose*, that the *souls which he has made shall not fail* before him.—The redemption by Christ to eternal life, supports our ideas,—as likewise, the soul's dissatisfaction with all created good, as incapable of making it truly happy, or affording it any satisfaction suited to its wishes. The language of the creature, in regard of solid felicity, is, “It is not in me.” And, sooner or later, the generality of mankind are brought to say, of every thing beneath the sun, “Miserable comforters are ye all.” Solid peace and contentment are seldom seen to dwell in those situations where every earthly good abounds in the richest profusion. But in the absence of all created good, the renewed mind can find its rest in God, in this boundless and undecaying good it centers, and is completely provided with whatever it wishes, and is forever blessed. David reduces this doctrine to experience, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*. Like the needle, touched with the magnet,
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he felt the ever-varying motion, till he came to this point : or, like the dove, he found no rest, for even the sole of his foot, till he entered the great ark of salvation. This holy quietude the godly have experienced in all cases, under the heaviest crosses,—the deepest afflictions,—the most painful agonies,—and in the worst of deaths. Over all these they have triumphed, and been more than conquerors*.

This exalted state of bliss will most perfectly correspond with the whole circle of our desires. Man, in his present constitution, is a compound of heaven and earth ; and a portion of both worlds is needful for his happiness. But when we are like him, who is our spiritual Head, we shall be completely holy, altogether spiritual ; and heavenly enjoyments will answer all the designs of infinite wisdom and boundless love. God will be all in all. There is an *admirable suitableness* in this state to the *nature of the soul*, as it is *spiritual*. The subject which closed the ministry of our dear friend, was the qualifications for, and the glorious possession of this eternal inhe-

* Heb. xi.

tance. 1 Peter i. 2, 3, 4. He contemplated the glory, and anticipated the felicity he now joyfully possesses. His happy spirit was prepared for the heavenly fruitions. Holiness was his element—in it he lived, breathed, and had his delight. The fish lives in the water; the bird in the air; and the worm in the earth: to exchange elements would be death to either, and not less so to a pious soul, to breathe any other air, but that of the new heavens; to tread on any other but the new earth; or to partake of any other water, for mental refreshment, but that of eternal life.

This state will be suited to the extent of the *capacity of mind*, yea, infinitely exceed it. The soul shall be qualified *to contemplate* the glory that shall be displayed to that degree, as shall create everlasting admiration, love, and praise. No darkness shall remain—we shall see as we are seen; and know even as also we are known. Enjoying the most perfect freedom from every incumbrance, and in the absence of every beclouding imperfection, *we shall see him as he is, and be for ever like him**. Not only shall we be capacitated for

* 1 John iii. 2.

contemplation, but for fruition. There the saints are filled with all the fulness of God. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

This bliss will be suited to the *duration* of the soul. That which is immortal may be considered as eternal. The immortal inhabitant must have a mansion that is eternal. *We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.* Were an idea to enter the minds of the blessed, that their bliss could cease, their joys would expire, and their harps would be on the willows, if willows were in heaven. “Perpetuity of bliss is bliss.” The eternity of heaven is the very heaven of heavens.

But the perfection of our glory will not be till *the resurrection of the just.* Our bodies, which are sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; their dishonour shall be followed with glory, and their weakness with power. That Jesus for whom we look, *shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according*
to

to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. Thus shall we be completely qualified for the enjoyments of heaven. What a glorious object for divine contemplation will Jehovah be to the redeemed spirit ! Every perfection will appear displayed, through the Redeemer, in the felicity and glory of his church. Infinitely short does the language of inspiration fall in describing the blessedness of heaven. In our present embodied state we are not capable of any just idea of it. How feeble then are my attempts to manifest this glory ! If my dear departed friend is now attentive to what I am speaking (and I know not but he may be), with a heavenly smile he pities my weakness, while he approves the attempt. What glory will adorn the soul while employed in contemplation in the upper world ! We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. How unfading the palm ! The inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

There is the *cessation*, yea, the *annihilation* of every cause of sorrow. The days of thy mourning shall be ended. Our friend was a cheerful christian, and clearly evinced

that religion was not intended to lessen our pleasures, but to animate, refine, and exalt them : he was nevertheless frequently clothed in sackcloth. He greatly lamented his own depravity, and was no less grieved for that of others. The wickedness of those around him often pierced his heart, and he prayed that God would not *lay their sin to their charge*. He mourned to see the unsanctified tempers of professors, and was distressed at their ill conduct : but he has done with grief*. Thy sun shall no more go down, *thy* sun, *thy own*, as though it was exclusive property ; *thine, all thine*, and as though it was only thine. Men of every description, from the cottager to the first of emperors, look around on their possessions, and are pleased with the idea—*this is mine*. But what are such puny claims, compared to the treasures, which the true believer may appropriate ? He can say of him who is the centre and circumference of all natural, providential, moral, spiritual, and eternal good, “ *he is mine.*” He is my inheritance to make me rich, my shield to defend me in my

* Rev. xxi. 5.

rightful possessions ; and, in yonder blisful state, my sun ever to shine on me ; for there it is day, all day, yea, always day. *There is no night there.* These skies are always serene ; the air is ever pure ; the *inhabitants are no more sick.* Let us for a moment contrast the present with the future world, in the words of Mr. Flavel, with a little variation : “ Here defiling corruption, there perfect purity ; here heart-rending sorrows, there the fulness of joy ; here entangling temptation, there everlasting freedom ; here distressing persecution, there eternal quietude ; here pinching wants, there universal supplies ; here distressing fears, there the highest security ; here deluding shadow, but there substantial good.” *They eat of the tree of life, and live for ever.* A word now by way of application.

Our venerable friend *was eminent for personal religion*, the only preparation for this glory, which he realized with fervent desire and triumphant joy. His was vital, pure, undefiled religion, unaffected and exalted piety. Such was his inoffensive life, that, with great propriety, we may adopt the expression of a poor man concerning him, as his corpse was carrying to the

grave: "There is a man in whose coat a moth-hole is not to be found." He had, in the best things, a *sound judgment*, and would not give countenance to such who did not most highly honour his Master. He possessed a *devoted heart*; he abounded in prayer*; and was favoured with much communion

Maidenhead, June 7, 1796.

• My dear Friend,

It was a very comprehensive promise which God made to Abraham, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." Our dear departed friend's sentiments, disposition, experience, and conduct, proved to all who knew him, that he was blessed and made a blessing to many. With great pleasure I recollect his uniform affection, and his often saying "Religion was nothing but love:" nor was he less distinguished for prayer. "He *prayed without ceasing*." It was no uncommon thing for prayer to be made in his house seven times a day. It was his constant practice, in company with his wife, to pray *three* times a day. And in case of absence, they met at the throne of grace at the same hour in the evening. He availed himself of every opportunity of the prayers of his friends, adopting the common proverb, "That nothing is got by thieving nor lost by praying." The last time I had the pleasure of visiting him, after dinner, he thus introduced prayer. "Come, suppose we should pray together, it may not be *lost* time; but it may be the *last* time, who can tell? and whether it be so or not, we shall not *repent* of having prayed together; do you think we shall?" The ungodly cannot say so of *their sinful* pleasures. You know, dear sir, that our beloved friend Blackwell was blessed in his late wife with an help-meet. He has often said to me, "Many wives are *bindrances* to a man's soul; but my wife is an

munion with his God and Saviour. I have lately observed his mind to be greatly abstracted,

an *help*, a help to my *soul*;—a *spiritual* help. This is a *mercy*, and a *great* one too: I esteem it so; and I hope I am thankful for it, and always shall be.”—The following occurrence will illustrate this truth. I received it from Mrs. Blackwell’s own mouth: “Our circumstances were reduced very low indeed:—bills were brought in which we could not discharge.—Our friends had repeatedly assisted us—we were ashamed to apply to them again—we prayed to the Lord night and day, under a full persuasion, that he, to whom “all things were possible;” could supply our wants. We prayed alternately. When my dear husband finished, I began: when I ceased, he “renewed his strength,” and “we wrestled; we wept; and made supplication.” We pleaded our distress—our *real* wants—our concern for the Lord’s glory—his power and faithfulness; and the dishonour my dear husband’s imprisonment (which we had daily reason to fear) might bring on the cause of Christ. At length my mind was greatly impressed with these words, “The earth helped the woman.” I examined them; mentioned them to my husband, and told him I believed our deliverance would be accomplished, and also was greatly encouraged by, “I will bring the blind by the way they know not; I will lead them in paths, that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” Isaiah xlii. 16. I applied to a person who knew us, for fifty pounds, “I will consult my son,” said he, in a rough tone; “but I am sure we cannot spare it.” While they were considering it, I prayed to the God of Heaven. He returned.—“We cannot let you have but thirty.”—“That,” said I, “will not serve us, we want fifty.” He again left me, and I again addressed the Lord, who “turns the hearts of men, as the waters, which

tracted, and a kind of instantaneous involuntary prayer has stole from him ere he way soever he pleaseth." The old gentleman returned with the fifty pounds. This was one step to our deliverance. A second person, who intended to have left my husband a sum of money by will, sent for him at that time, and gave him the money before he died. A third person, in London, unsolicited, sent us down three hundred pounds worth of materials for making paper, with a letter, saying, we might pay him when, and as we could. "Thus," said that dear woman, "we called upon God in the day of trouble; he delivered us, and we ought to glorify his name."

Thus "their captivity was turned;" their debts were discharged; they prospered; and for the last twenty years enjoyed a comfortable sufficiency to supply their own need, gratify their hospitable disposition to their friends, and their generous feelings towards the poor.

"Why should the wonders he hath wrought
Be lost in silence, and forgot?"

"After this," said Mrs. B. "I thought we might have any thing of the Lord which he had promised: and I am persuaded that if professors would read their bibles more, and pray more, they would not complain from year to year of doubts and fears, as if the Lord had done nothing for them." How well, my friend, does this accord with David's experience, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from ALL MY FEARS."

In the death of this happy pair, another Zachariah and Elizabeth have left the world; they were much valued when alive, but their worth is now known and felt to a greater degree. In the prospect of meeting you, with them, in the presence of the Redeemer and all his redeemed,

I remain your's,

very affectionately,

JOHN COOKE.

was

was aware. His life was most *exemplary*; he walked by the rule which his master had enjoined. Even the world will testify that he was *an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men*, and with general approbation.—His holy life recommended his religion, and gave dignity to his character in the sight of all.

As a *minister of Christ*, he was the *honoured instrument of preparing others* for that state of happiness of which we have been speaking. A *minister*, did I say? He was an *apostle*. He had a truly missionary spirit, an apostolick mind. Forty years with unwearied diligence he has been preaching the gospel in this neighbourhood, and the societies round about us. He was used to call himself *a stop-gap*—he repaired and kept up the fences of the neighbouring churches to an extent of many miles. He scattered the good seed every where about us; in public by his ministry, in private by his friendly visits, and in his kind and ready attention to the sick and afflicted: these were profited by his faithful counsels, and his fervent prayers; nor did he say, where pecuniary supply was needful, “Be ye warmed and be ye clothed;” for the bowels of his compassion were never shut—his charities
were

were excessive—the canker did not corrode his gold. It was his great concern to do good in his life ; “ nor had he a single wish,” to use his own words, “ for the continuance of it, but to be more useful, and advance more the glory of Jesus Christ.” There are some in this assembly who were the first-fruits of his labours ; and, as his spiritual children, remain to this day living proofs of the power of his ministry. He has long laboured, and for many years *I* have entered into his labours, and evidenced his usefulness. There is much seed, we hope still, under the clods ; it is not perished, it will vegetate, and spring, and produce the fruits of righteousness. It has been watered with his prayers and tears, and the all-prolific sun, we doubt not, will shine upon it. *Not a grain shall be lost.* You are now, with renewed supplication, and tears, watering the same seed. These tears and supplications are noticed in heaven ; fail they cannot ; they must have their effect ; *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*.*

* Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6.

As to the nature of our friend's ministry, it was *simple* and *unaffected*. He aimed to do good, and forget himself. He only wished to recommend his Master. His preaching was powerful, penetrating, and energetic. It was sufficiently evident that he was not possessed of human learning. Be it so: we will say, he knew his spiritual alphabet, from the alpha to the omega, from the beginning to the end. He could spell the letters and syllables of this alphabet, and was well acquainted with the different parts of speech—could construe, with accuracy, this pure language—was well read in the prophets and apostles, and had a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. What though he had no acquaintance with letters, nor grammatical construction; though he was a stranger to rhetorical flourishes, or well-turned periods; he was possessed of a treasure far superior to all these *. His sharp-pointed arrows, from his bow of steel, di-

* I am no enemy to learning; I conceive highly of erudition, and value learned men; but in the ministry of the gospel it is not necessarily wanted; and, in comparison of influence and power, it is nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity: this is daily demonstrated.

rected by an unerring hand, entered, fixed, and did their work ; nor were they extracted till the balm was applied—till the virtues of the leaves of the tree of life were proved, which are *for the healing of the nations*. He frequently used to say, “ that he drew the bow at a venture—that the Lord had the direction of the arrow—that he knew not the cases of the people—that he must *live* with them to know them.” He entered not into the field with Saul’s improved, but unconsecrated armour ; but, like *David*, with *a sling and a stone from his shepherd’s bag*, he prevailed over the Philistine. *Goliath* fell before him, and our Israel shouted ! He used to say, “ I am no silver trumpet ; I am an unpolished ram’s horn.” But his *sound* was certain, powerful, and effective ; before it the strong walls of Jericho fell. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* *.

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Persons destitute of spiritual taste, and who had no relish for the gospel in its simplicity, had their objections; and many refused the bread, because, as he used to say, “it was *brown bread*, not served up in a silver dish.” But the Lord put honour on his ministry. *He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence* *. What wonders were wrought in Nineveh by the short but powerful sermon of Jonah! The wish of the little maid for her *leprous* master, and the simple declaration of the woman of Samaria, were the means, under God, to effect the most important purposes! The greatest things are often accomplished by the most unpromising instruments. Many pride themselves on being intended from their childhood for the ministry; and are not a little inflated with their literary attainments. It

* 1 Cor. i. 26—28.

would be an insult on your judgment, observation, and experience, to labour to evince that the most useful ministers, among all denominations, have, in numerous instances, appeared to be those who were not pre-appointed by *men* for the work, but who have received their qualifications from the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and been directed by the providence of God, into the different communities where they exercise their ministry. We are not conscious of pride in saying that we do not conceive that others stand on higher ground than these ; and the most regular, if really good, *are not ashamed, with their master, to call them brethren*. I honoured my departed friend as my bishop ; his name is dear to me ; I loved him * ; we lived and laboured in union and peace. O that *a double portion of the spirit of my Elijah may rest on me*, and the mantle of his graces ever be worn by me ; and may I inquire with diligence and good effect, both to myself and

* “ I loved him much ; but now I love him more.
Like birds, whose beauties languish, half concealed,
Till mounted on the wing, their glossy plumes,
Expanding shine with azure, green and gold.
How blessings brighten as they take their flight !” YOUNG.
others,

others, *where is the Lord God of Elijah?* I bless God that he was so long continued. Many, however, are clothed in sackcloth. We have put on our weeds—the churches mourn—the world feels and weeps too—lamentation is heard all around us! The name of our place is *Bochim*, the place of *weepers* *. But Jesus is not dead—the clouds may disperse—and who can tell but we may yet live to see *the light of the moon as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun, sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth this sore stroke of their wound* †.

In our friend there was an assemblage of excellencies. He was a lovely example for ministers both in his spirit and diligence. He laboured even to weariness, but frequently would with cheerfulness say, “It is better to wear out, than to rust out.” He was truly disinterested; he preached the gospel freely; he felt the truth of that declaration, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*. As to myself and my brother who is near me, we are so circumstanced in Providence, that

* Judges xi. 5.

† Isa. xxx. 26.

the kindness of our friends is needful, yea required ; for it is ordained of God, *that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel*. But his pocket supported the cause as well as his ministry. With great propriety you may suppose him now saying to you, “ I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel ; ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “ it is more blessed to give than to receive *.” He was *generous and open-hearted*—like a true bishop, *given to hospitality*. He was remarkably affectionate to his *young* friends, and greatly desirous of their salvation. For *you* also his prayers were fervent, and I hope, in due time, they will be answered, and his kind advices recollected and affectionately regarded. May his death prove the mean of reviving them upon your minds ; and may they sink into your hearts, and be productive of happy effects ! His true worth will be

* Acts xx. 33, 34, 35.

best seen now he is no more. The beauty and excellence of the favours of Providence are often concealed while we possess them. The plumage of a beautiful bird on the ground is hid; but when it rises and takes its flight, its beauties appear. The worth of our dear departed friend, in a relative capacity, as *father, master, neighbour, and friend*, the general course of his conduct has amply proved; and the circumstances of his death have established it as long as his memory shall live. I will now, with my feeble ray of light, resembling that of the glow-worm, retire; while this bright, burning and shining light shall instruct you; and some of you, who may have heretofore despised his instruction, *you* shall see, from his worn-out, broken *pitcher, the heavenly lamp* diffusing its rays in every direction, and enlightening all around. I know but little, and have read but little, but it appears to me, that the valuable person of whom I am speaking, is only exceeded by the venerable patriarch when giving his blessing to the twelve tribes. He honoured his Lord in his life, and the Lord favoured his servant in death. A grand-daughter, about twenty-

three years of age, going to visit him, he said to her, “ You have a praying grandfather, who has put up thousands of petitions for you ; but on these you must not depend ; you must pray for yourself—read the word of God, attend the means of grace, renounce the world, and take care what company you keep ; the Lord bless you ! ”

To the reverend Mr. Sleaf he said, “ The Lord bless you in your body and soul ! The Lord bless you as a minister, and make you faithful and successful ! The Lord bless your child ! ”

To dear Mrs. Blackwell's niece, “ The Lord bless you ! The Lord bless your husband ! The Lord bless your children ! May you live holy, and die happy ! ”

To his housekeeper ; “ The Lord bless you ! You have been a kind and faithful friend to me, and the Lord will take care of you. We have often prayed together, you know. You may still retire to your closet—do not grieve—The Lord bless you ! ”

To a daughter—“ I am now going to do as good old Jacob did, to bless you all, my children, and then draw up my feet, and die.

die. I will bless you all. I have put up thousands of prayers for you. See you do not live without prayer; be sure read the word of God; neglect not the means of grace; keep the sabbath holy.—I have been a living, and now am a dying witness to the reality of religion.—See now, I am not afraid to die. God bless you!”

To his other daughter—“ See, here, a dying father—I never forgot my children, though they were not with me;—it is now fifty years since I began to pray. Hear you the gospel—pray—read the word—keep the sabbath—but after all, remember, you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if ever you are saved; and tell your husband what a dying father says. May the Lord bless you all!”

To another person he said, “ It is an awful thing to be the instruments of bringing children into the world, and to be careless about their souls.—Your conscience witnesses to the truth of what I say. O read, pray, and hear the gospel. Do not spend your time in public-houses and in trifling. The Lord bless you! You have not been careful of those about you, as you should

have been.—Go to Jesus to be saved as a sinner.—Do not be angry with me.—You know I must be faithful.—The Lord bless you!—You see I am not afraid to die.”

Stretching out his dying hand to receive his grandson, he bid him not grieve, and said, “ I have *preached* Christ, now I am going to *enjoy* him. I think I shall be in heaven before morning. My next sabbath will be spent there. I am lingering on the brink. I am now going to be taken from you. This has been, for many years, a *praying family*, I could wish it so *to continue* when I am gone. You and —— (an old servant) keep up family prayer.—It will be your honour.—A few words from the heart—be not discouraged. Mind not the ridicule of the world—attend all duties—bear your testimony against sin in the mill—love good men from good principles—use them kindly when they call upon you, as I have done. The Lord bless you, and be with you, through life, death, and to eternity ! That is my prayer for you—I can say no more.”

To a little girl, about twelve years old, he said, “ Come, my little dear, I will give

you a double portion—Benjamin's mess, the Lord blefs you !”

To a grand-daughter, about eleven years old, “ Remember your dying grandfather. Be sure you be a good child, and pray—and remember you must be saved by Jesus Christ, if ever you are saved.”

When his servants, who worked in his mill, entered his room. To the first he said, “ You are morally sober, honest, and industrious ; but that is not religion. I have prayed for you, but you must pray for yourself—you must go to Jesus Christ ; you must be pardoned through his blood ; justified through his righteousness ; and sanctified, and made meet for heaven. I trust I have prayed and served God for fifty years *,
and

* His first serious impressions were occasioned by a violent fever, about fifty years ago. A sanctified fever brought him into the kingdom of grace ; and by a like complaint, which he caught in his kind attention on the sick, he had his entrance into the kingdom of glory. The way in which he was brought to preach is not out of recollection : three or four good men used, on the Sabbath evening, to repeat the substance of the sermon which they had heard, for their own and the edification of others—he was one of them ; here he had an occasion to speak his own thoughts, which proved edifying. He was
encouraged

and now I am glad to be saved as a poor sinner. 'The Lord blefs you !'

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encouraged by those who found them so, to preach from house to house, as opportunity offered. It must be remarked, that this little conference was a mean of keeping alive the spark of religion in these parts, and has produced a spreading flame within these last thirty years. The expulsion of the students from Oxford was a further mean of giving an establishment to the gospel among us ; as the Rev. T. Grove, on his return, opened his house, and when that was found too small for the people, he converted one of his barns into a chapel ; since which, that being found too small, it has been enlarged and a gallery added. Our departed friend was very assisting to Mr. Grove, and for the last eighteen years, in the same situation, he has most freely and affectionately continued to help me on all occasions ; rejoicing in every opportunity to do good, and to testify his love towards us : and such is the goodness of God to our neighbourhood, that we can see with great pleasure another considerable congregation in the midst of us ; first gathered under the ministry of the late Rev. Mr. Clarke, and now established under the ministry of the Rev. G. C. Brodbelt, in a chapel at Loudwater, built by Mr. W. Davies, from the pure motive of gratitude to his God and Saviour, and with an ardent wish to promote his glory in the salvation of his surrounding neighbours. How is our little one become a thousand !—I would here subjoin a few thoughts, communicated by my friend the Rev. J. Cooke, of Maidenhead, relative to the call of my friend to his ministry.

Dear Mr. Blackwell was a man who never read an English grammar. And some, who pride themselves on their learning, have smiled at his illiteracy, and on that account despised his ministry. Others, filled with proud self-sufficiency, have said,

To another servant, whom he addressed in a singular way, he said, "Live in peace with your family—with your wife and children—nor fall out, nor be contentious. The Lord bless you!"

To two grandsons he spake, "Come, my boys, let me bless you. Be sure you be good boys. Let not the wicked world enslave you. When your wicked companions

said, "If Mr. Blackwell is qualified to preach, why may not I attempt it?"—Such would do well to recollect the following remarks:

1st. Mr. Blackwell entered on his ministry at a very dark *time*, and in a very dark *place*. He addressed those who could understand him, perhaps better than if he had been a learned man. However, in the most important sense, he had "the tongue of the learned."

2dly. He was a very humble man; very reluctant to rush into places where men of greater ministerial talents laboured—he would not go but when *necessity* called him.

3dly. He was a *most eminent* CHRISTIAN. He was richly anointed with the Holy Ghost. There was a *simplicity* and a *savour* attending his conversation, his prayers, and his preaching, which gave him a distinguished superiority to many ministers of greater gifts.

4thly. The broad seal of heaven was affixed to his preaching. He was more useful than many—than most—in the surrounding neighbourhood. "THE HAND OF THE LORD was with him, and many believed and turned to the Lord." At that time, men from whom nothing was expected, were the principal instruments which God patronized.

invite

invite you, don't consent to them. Read your Bibles—pray to God—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot be saved without Jesus Christ. The Lord bless you !”

To another of his servants—“ What do you think about dying? Did you ever think where you were going to? You know there are but two places, heaven and hell.—When I am gone be faithful, don't deceive—be honest and upright. The Lord bless you !”

To another servant—“ Look on your dying master ; if *you* was where I am, and to die to-night, *you* would surely go to hell ; and if *I* die to night, *I* shall surely go to heaven. Your conscience tells you, you do not read the word of God—you break the sabbath—you do not pray in your family.” —“ Yes, master,” said the man, “ I do.” “ Ah ! when,” said his master. “ Every night,” said he. “ And,” said his master, “ what do you say ?” “ O,” said he, “ I do as well as I can.” Said his master, “ You live in sin.” “ Yes, master, I do.” “ Then,” said the good old man, “ thy prayers are an abomination to the Lord. You do not believe

believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—you must be changed. The Lord bless you !”

The next he spake to, were four little boys, whom he addressed in a very affectionate manner, according to their ages, and blessed them.

He addressed the next, who was an old servant, in a different manner from all the rest. “ You fear God—you read and pray—you believe in Christ—you love, serve, and honour him—you will be soon with him in glory. I charge you to pray in this family when I am gone. The Lord bless you !”

To his maid servant—“ What have you thought since I have been ill ? Did you ever pray in sincerity—have you any knowledge of Jesus Christ—of salvation by him ? Did you ever see the danger there is in sin ? Pray without ceasing. The Lord bless you, and be with you through life, and death, and bring you to everlasting glory !”

—“ I did not preach last Lord’s day, but the Lord has made it up to-day. Samson slew more at his death than through his whole life. May the Lord grant it may be so to-day ! Sometimes the Lord blesses the words of dying men.” When he saw them in tears

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about him, he added, "This is the seed-time; those who sow in tears, shall reap in joy; and, I trust, it is a healing time also, yea, it is a glorious time. These are my last legacies."

On my coming from town to see him, on Thursday evening, he expressed his concern at my being returned from the missionary opportunities, and discovered his sympathy at my fatigue in journeying, and told me he had been preaching to his people.— "About Thursday," he added, "you will bury me, you will then preach at Wycomb and at Wooburn on the sabbath; O my Wooburn friends! Let six ministers hold up my pall—say nothing about me."—I said, "not particularly about *him*,—but I might say what the grace of God had done *for* him, *in* him, and *by* him."—He saw the distinction, and expressed his satisfaction. Speaking of Mrs. Blackwell, he said, "I shall soon see her. What a meeting will it be! what do you think she will say to me? But we do not understand the language of heaven now." It was replied, she would welcome him there. I said, "Let me have an interest in your kind wishes." He said, "You shall have my dy-
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ing

ing prayer." And, after a solemn pause, he said, "The Lord bless you in your ministry, in your soul, in your body, in your family, in all you have, and in all you are—The Lord bless you!" In a short prayer I then committed him to that God who redeemed him from all evil, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen, and amen. The next morning I saw him again; he requested me to pray that he might be dismissed, and expressed his assurance that he was on the rock, and wished to be gone. Taking a little nourishment, he said, "This is better than Christ had. They gave him vinegar and gall—this is better than I deserve." After taking a little wine—"May I want no more, till I drink it new in my Father's kingdom!" On mentioning his kind friends, Mrs. Wildman's family, he paused and prayed, that God would give them *prudence, patience, and glory*. On the Friday he rather revived, but the restlessness of death was on him all through the day, and at about twelve at night he was heard to say, by his kind friend Mr. Sleaf, a little before his departure,—“Cut it—cut it short—cut it in the middle.”—It was soon done, and he winged his way to mansions

mansions of eternal light and glory: where the sun goes no more down, nor the moon withdraws herself—where the Lord is his everlasting light, and the days of his mourning are ended.

THE END.

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